

## **2011 State of the City of Evansville, Wisconsin**

About ten days ago, I attended a workshop entitled “Doing More With Less: Collaborative Leadership for Service Delivery” at the UW-Madison. It was sponsored by the Local Government Institute of Wisconsin, which was formed in October 2007 by the League of Wisconsin Municipalities, Wisconsin Towns Association, Wisconsin Counties Association, and Wisconsin Alliance of Cities, now merged with the League. The four organizations recognized that while their view points differed in many areas, it was necessary to work together to address efficient, cost-effective delivery of local services to the residents of Wisconsin.

Dan Thompson, Executive Director of the League, was a workshop attendee as opposed to a speaker. He made the following observation during the open discussion at the end of the workshop—local elected officials are being faced with challenging and complicated issues, and are necessarily expected to perform way beyond “Government 101.” He pointed out that the high expectations for local governments are occurring at the same time that there are a large number of newly-elected officials.

First, I would like to thank all of you, the Common Council, for your service. I know each of you is committed to serving the residents of Evansville and that you have the best interests of our community at heart. We have been addressing challenges as they arise, but there are certainly more to come.

For the second year, the City of Evansville Committee Roster is full, with a waiting list. Our citizens are actively engaged in working on behalf of Evansville. We are fortunate to have interested, dedicated people sharing ideas, time, and talents to enhance the vitality of our community through committee service.

Our City Staff deserve our thanks. As public employees who have been in the spotlight and subject to the roller coaster ride of the past several months, we value your work and commitment. Your partnership with the Common Council will be instrumental as we work for the residents of Evansville, making continued improvements and operational efficiencies to provide the best services possible with limited resources.

The coming months will be very busy. On May 13, this Friday, we will be receiving redistricting materials from Rock County. We then have sixty days, until July 11, to determine the re-balanced local voting districts and pass the related ordinance. The districts will remain as we determine for ten years, so we will need to use our best judgment as to where the actual growth in our neighborhoods will happen.

This Saturday evening Creekside Place will open with the annual Chili Cook-off. Evansville has successfully accomplished an extraordinary project under extremely challenging economic conditions. Over \$3.5 million has been dedicated to support a

community/senior center that will become the heart of our downtown and our community.

The Wisconsin Wastewater Operators Association will hold their Southern Region spring meeting on May 19 at the Evansville Golf Club. Members will tour our newly updated wastewater treatment facility and wind turbine as part of their day-long meeting. The City of Evansville Wastewater Treatment Plant has been selected a Top Project of 2010 by the "Wisconsin Daily Reporter," a daily business newspaper dedicated to construction news. The award ceremony will be held on May 25 in Waukesha. Among other Wisconsin building projects selected for 2010 are Eckstein Hall (Law School) at Marquette University, Madison Children's Museum, Sun Prairie High School, and the Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery in Madison.

Next month the Common Council will receive the five-year review and update to the June 2005 Smart Growth Comprehensive Plan following more than a year of work by the Plan Commission and various City committees and departments. Page 1 of the Evansville Comprehensive Plan states that "Good planning requires continual review of implementation successes and failures, citizen desires and the surrounding environment so that the plan can be adjusted as needed." 1999 Wisconsin Act 9 requires that a comprehensive plan must be updated at least every ten years. The Council Public Hearing and possible action on the Comprehensive Plan Amendment is scheduled for the June 14 meeting.

One of the outcomes from the review process has been the agreement between the City of Evansville and Town of Union to begin exploration of collaborative opportunities between the city and town. We met last night and heard a presentation from the Wisconsin Department of Administration on extraterritorial jurisdiction and boundary agreements. In June we plan to invite a representative from the Local Government Institute to speak on opportunities for collaborations in the delivery of local services. At the City Department Head meeting that was held yesterday, the City/Town joint meeting was mentioned. When the purpose of the Council/Board meetings was explained, the discussion by the Department Heads became animated and some good ideas were quickly generated. Ideas for collaboration will be an agenda item for the June Department Head meeting.

City Planner John Stockham is retiring on June 30 and the city has begun the search for future planning services. The request for proposals deadline is May 27. Interviews will occur in June.

We expect the completion of the 2010 audit in the next several weeks. Housing Authority numbers will be available by May 31 and are incorporated into the city audit report. The audit will become available at approximately the same time we begin work on the 2012 budget.

A Committee of the Whole meeting will likely be held in late June and will include time for department updates and project descriptions and preliminary work on development of

operational priorities and strategies for the city in view of expected shared revenue reductions.

Attention to the current City budget and early planning for the 2012 budget have been nearly continuous. Our constant vigilance of incoming revenues and actual expenditures is necessary. Our early preparations for the 2012 budget process should yield benefits later this year.

Concerted effort has been undertaken in recent years, and has become even more important the last several months, to engage in advocacy opportunities at the national and state level. City representatives have been participating in legislative rallies in Washington and Madison to address the impacts of existing and proposed legislation on our city. Several alders participate in the League of Wisconsin Municipalities Lobbying Corps. As mayor, I have been appointed to the League Advisory Committee on Legislation. It is important that local governments create awareness for the Wisconsin Legislature and Federal Government as we reconsider service delivery with reduced funding.

Shortly after the Fourth of July celebration, the East Main Street Bridge will be completely reconstructed. This means there will be a Main Street detour for approximately three months. Minimizing community disruption and detrimental financial impacts on local businesses will need to be a priority.

The South Sixth Street storm water improvement project is planned for this summer. The plans have been submitted for Department of Natural Resources approval. Homeowners in the area have been notified of the project.

Substantial historic preservation activities are continuing. The South Central Region of the Wisconsin Council on Local History, an association of 375 local history societies and museums in the state, will hold a meeting at Creekside Place in Evansville on July 11. Leonard-Leota Park and St. John's Lutheran Church nominations to the State of Wisconsin Historic Register and National Register of Historic Places will be considered by the State Review Board this August.

This year the Park and Recreation Board intends to focus on Lake Leota improvements such as weed eradication and shoreline enhancement, as well as possible additional Allen Creek wall restoration, using available proceeds from the existing Lake Leota Fund and Antes Fund. S.O.L.E. (Save Our Lake Environment) continues to improve fish habitat and undertake re-stocking in Lake Leota. A handicap-accessible pier was installed within the last month as an Eagle Scout Project by Connor Williams and is located in a prime area for fishing and nature viewing. A bird-watching activity in the Park last Saturday morning resulted in sightings of dozens of varieties of birds, including a pair of scarlet tanagers, warblers, orioles, finches, nuthatches, grosbeaks, wood ducks, cranes, and woodpeckers. Leonard-Leota Park is a community treasure, and its likely listing on the National Register of Historic Places as a designed landscape, as well as its many

recreational and sports opportunities, will ensure that it continues to be an Evansville “gem” for future generations.

In the coming months the City Economic Development Committee will refocus its efforts on the Economic Development Plan completed more than two years ago. A review of implementation activities will determine areas that have been neglected and are in need of attention. As we enter the second year of Discover Wisconsin marketing, the Committee will take action to maximize the opportunities created by the investment in this increased community advertising. The second air date of the Evansville television episode of Discover Wisconsin will be on August 27 and was selected to provide a boost for the 14 South Artists Studio Tour and the Harvest Windmill Festival scheduled in September. A Discover Wisconsin radio spot will run next week to showcase the Evansville Civil War Commemoration. Another radio spot will be produced to run in September to highlight our fall activities. I have requested that the Committee develop a long-term community marketing plan that will build upon the Discover Wisconsin media package once it is completed while avoiding duplicative efforts of various community groups. This will help us get the most bang for our buck. Another important focus of the Committee will be to support and capitalize on the wonderful community opportunities that will result from the opening of Creekside Place.

Our community organizations and volunteers continue their outstanding work to make Evansville a special place. The Grove Society is completing final details of the Rally ‘Round the Flag Civil War Commemoration weekend on May 20-22 that will bring history buffs to our community. Wisconsin Department of Tourism Secretary Stephanie Klett will speak at the Flag-Raising Ceremony on May 21, returning to Evansville a year after the Discover Wisconsin Premiere Party at Lake Leota. Collaborations with the Masons, Lions, American Legion, Evansville Community Partnership, Evansville Community Theater, Eager Free Public Library, Evansville Community School District, and the Evansville Youth Center will make this weekend event successful. The Wounded Warrior Fundraiser Event, Big Red’s Backyard Bash, at Geneo’s on June 4 will bring additional visitors to our area.

The Evansville Chamber continues its message to “Buy Local” and plans are underway for the second Inside Out Days on August 6, to be held in conjunction with the City-wide Garage Sale Day. The Olde Fashioned Christmas will be the weekend of November 18-19. The fledgling Evansville Farmer’s Market held on Saturdays certainly promotes the “buy local” concept.

Evansville Community Partnership continues its important work coordinating community activities that support inclusiveness and neighborliness. The Energy Fair, Chili Cook-off, 4<sup>th</sup> of July Celebration, and Harvest Windmill Festival are community staples that encourage citizen participation. Work of a small group of volunteers resulted in the selection of Evansville as a Bird City Wisconsin in the program’s inaugural year. This is just a partial list of the projects and activities in Evansville.

The brunt of the recession is now impacting the cities and villages across Wisconsin and Evansville has not been immune to the economic woes. We are pleased that our local businesses continue to make investments in our community, including expansions at VP-BlueScope, Kopecky's Piggly Wiggly, All 'N One, and LiteWire. The re-opening of the Stoughton Trailer Facility is welcome news to Evansville.

Our city has invested millions of dollars in infrastructure improvements throughout our community, most recently completing the wastewater treatment plant upgrade. Quality infrastructure investments are necessary for economic development, according to our Smart Growth Plan. Also, the Evansville Chamber has received City funding to develop an inventory of commercial properties in Evansville, an action item identified in the Smart Growth Comprehensive Plan.

Finally, I will repeat for our residents, the City of Evansville is in strong financial shape. We have a healthy general fund balance that we have traditionally earmarked for unexpected financial situations. Our debt is below the suggested 50% of permitted debt capacity, a conservative goal recommended by Ehlers, our long-time financial advisors. We have not been using debt to fund operating expenses, as is the case in some Wisconsin communities. Closely monitoring budget "sausage-making" in Madison, we anticipate a lean 2012 City budget that will not require deep cuts to local services.

At the Madison collaboration workshop I mentioned at the beginning of this report, several speakers mentioned the critical importance of strong local leadership at this juncture. The word courage was used more than once. Significant governmental change is certain at all levels, and with it comes inertia, uncertainty, and discomfort. We must use the current economic and political environment as an opportunity to strengthen our community and proactively build better local service delivery that emphasizes efficiency and cost-effectiveness. I am absolutely convinced that Evansville has the talent and tools to accomplish a vital, vibrant future for our community. It is my honor to work with the Common Council, City Staff, City Committees, community organizations, and residents to move our city forward.

#### Energy Saving Tip

The U.S. Department of Energy suggests you consider buying a laptop for your next computer upgrade; they use much less energy than desktop computers. Look for energy-saving Energy Star labeled home electronics. Overall, office products with an Energy Star label use about half the energy of standard equipment.

#### Community Announcements

The Rally 'Round the Flag Civil War Commemoration will be held this weekend, May 20-22. From fireworks and cannon firings to a military ball at Creekside Place and living history theater at Maple Hill Cemetery, there are events planned all weekend. School-aged youth are invited to drill with the troops.

The Memorial Day Parade will be held at 10:00 a.m. on Monday, May 30. The Parade begins at the Post Office and proceeds down Main Street to Maple Hill Cemetery on Cemetery Road. From 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., VFW Post 6905 will host the Rally in the Alley with food, fun, and music, with the annual Chamber Raffle occurring at 3:00 p.m.

#### Community Congratulations/Thanks

Congratulations to the after school High Mileage Vehicle Club for your success at the UW-Stout competition. Your multiple first place wins are terrific! I spoke about your club in a presentation about Evansville's energy projects and initiatives at a meeting of the Wisconsin Building Safety Network in Elkhart Lake. You contribute to Evansville's reputation as an energy leader.

Congratulations to the cast, crew, pit orchestra, and volunteers of EHS Guys and Dolls for winning a Tommy Award for Outstanding Musical. It was a great show!

The Evansville Police report that the drug drop-off box at the station is being heavily used by our citizens. Thanks, Evansville, for protecting our youth and keeping drugs out of our groundwater! I encourage everyone to continue using the box for proper disposal of all unused and expired over-the-counter and prescription drugs. Drugs should be kept in original containers with names blacked out for privacy.

The City of Evansville thanks the Evansville Community School District for the use of the Performing Arts Center for the May Plan Commission meeting and public hearing. Doug Zblewski, Pete Diedrich, Barb Krumwiede, Louie Pomplun, Steve Maloney, and Scott Everson deserve special thanks for assisting with details of the meeting.

Last weekend's Chili Cook-off was a wonderful event for the opening of Creekside Place. It was the place to be on a rainy Saturday evening. I offer heartfelt thanks to the hundreds of Evansville donors, businesses, organizations, and individuals, and the many volunteers that worked together to bring Creekside Place to reality. What a remarkable accomplishment and a beautiful facility! It will be the Evansville community's living/family room for decades to come.